

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Department of Vermont Health Access

September 25, 2013

Contact: Emily Yahr

Contact Phone Number: 802-343-8218

Contact E-mail Address: Emily.Yahr@state.vt.us

Vermont Health Connect Officials Spreading the Word about New Benefits Available to Vermonters

New survey indicates progress made in reaching Vermonters and colors strategy for continued outreach

WINOOSKI, VT – This fall, many Vermonters will use the Vermont Health Connect marketplace to shop for and enroll in health plans that meet their unique needs and budgets. October 1st marks the start of the 6 month open-enrollment period when Vermonters will sign up for new health plans, taking effect as early as January 1st, through Vermont Health Connect. Health Connect representatives are increasing outreach efforts to ensure that eligible Vermonters have the information they need to enroll in a health plan during the first open-enrollment period.

A recent survey commissioned by Vermont Health Connect found that that more Vermonters are learning about Vermont Health Connect. In the survey, 44% of Vermont respondents 18-64 years old said they have heard of the new insurance marketplace. Awareness has increased in the past year, however this hardly means that work is complete. Throughout the 6 month open-enrollment period and beyond, Vermont Health Connect officials and partners will work to increase that number, providing the information that Vermonters are requesting about options available through the health insurance marketplace.

Vermont Health Connect's outreach effort heavily depends upon two strategies – grassroots outreach and media. Since the recent survey was conducted, Vermont Health Connect has launched television, radio and print ads and a social media presence to get the word out, which is expected to have a big impact on awareness levels. Vermont's Navigators have also recently begun their work, conducting one-on-one, grassroots outreach in every county in the state.

"More Vermonters have information about Vermont Health Connect, but we know we have work left to do. We are focused on reaching Vermonters most impacted by the coming changes," said Mark Larson, Commissioner of the Department of Vermont Health Access. "We are concentrating on making sure employees of small businesses, Vermonters who will be eligible for financial help or Medicaid, and part-time workers and the uninsured are getting the information they need."

The recent survey reinforces the fact that the Vermonters who are most interested in using Vermont Health Connect are also the Vermonters who are most likely to benefit from the marketplace.

"It's essential that we reach Vermonters who are eligible to use the new marketplace with the Vermont Health Connect message," said Lindsey Tucker, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Vermont

Health Access. “Vermont Health Connect offers Vermonters real choices of quality, comprehensive and, often, low-cost health plans.”

Today, most Vermont small businesses only offer their employees the choice of one or two health plans, if any at all. Starting in 2014, small businesses that offer health insurance will be giving their employees the choice of 9-18 health plans. For businesses that do not offer health insurance, their employees, as well as anyone purchasing on their own, will have the choice of at least 18 different plans, and they may be eligible for financial help that can lower their monthly premiums and out-of-pocket medical costs.

Vermont Health Connect is designed to ease and inform the process of choosing health insurance by allowing Vermonters to make apples-to-apples comparisons of quality health plans, find out if they’re eligible for a free health plan or financial help to lower their medical costs, and enroll in a plan – all in one place. No long waiting periods and no one can be denied because they have a pre-existing condition.

Vermont Health Connect is web-based, but Vermonters can also learn more and enroll through a toll-free Vermont-based call center (855-899-9600) or with in-person assistance from Navigators or brokers.

Facebook: www.Facebook.com/VermontHealthConnect

Twitter: www.Twitter.com/VTHealthConnect

YouTube: www.YouTube.com/VTHealthConnect

###